

GHANA



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STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY
ALHAJI ALIU MAHAMA
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
GHANA**

**AT THE 59TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE UNITED NATIONS**

**23RD SEPTEMBER 2004
NEW YORK**

Mr. President,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have the distinct honor to congratulate you, Mr. President, a distinguished African diplomat, on your election to preside over the 59th Session of this august Assembly and to wish you success in your undertaking. I would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the dedication and commitment, which he brought to bear on his stewardship of the 58th Session.

Mr. President,

Three years ago, a terrible tragedy hit this city. The unprecedented terrorist attacks of September 11 resulted in the death of thousands of innocent people of many nationalities, including some from my own country of Ghana. The whole world shared the pain and sorrow of New York in the aftermath of those atrocities. Also, the whole world rose in solidarity with the people of the United States to ensure that such tragedies do not happen again.

Mr. President, 11th September reminds us of the importance of seeking a multilateral and peaceful means for the maintenance of international peace and security, especially now when it has become evident that only collective, multilateral efforts will suffice to defeat the new scourge of mankind - global terrorism.

The UN has an indispensable role to play, being the most universal and representative intergovernmental organization, and the best forum for the practice of multilateralism. However, the success of multilateralism and collective security will depend on how the reforms of the UN system are implemented. In this regard, we applaud the initiative of our illustrious compatriot, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in setting up the High-Level Panel on Threats and Challenges to the UN, to make proposals on how the UN can best be reformed to meet the new challenges of our world.

We in Africa agree that the objectives of the UN reforms including the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council are to enhance the role of the Organization and its capacity to overcome current threats and emerging challenges. The reforms should be in conformity with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the process must be based on full consultations in a democratic and transparent manner. To this end, we look forward to a revitalized General Assembly that would assume its rightful position as the most authoritative and representative organ of the United Nations.

With regard to the Security Council, the African position emphasizes the need to democratize and ensure equitable geographical representation, with Africa allotted no less than two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats in the expanded Security Council.

Mr. President,

I wish now to address the crucial issue of poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable development in developing countries, where widespread poverty is endemic, particularly in Africa. As we strive to overcome our current economic woes, we need the world's solidarity, resources, technical know-how and support. The historic United Nations Millennium Summit, which brought together 189 nations in September 2000 and adopted the Millennium Declaration, was a clarion call for action to solve these problems and set forth the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with measurable goals and targets for combating them. The international community on that occasion pledged "to spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty."

Africa has adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which reaffirms our belief that Africans have the primary responsibility to solve the problems of poverty, hunger, disease, and illiteracy afflicting the majority of our population and to stem Africa's marginalisation from global markets. In tandem, we are striving to foster political stability, accountable and transparent governance under the rule of law, because we believe it is the right thing to do. Ghana has volunteered as the first country in Africa for the African Peer Review Mechanism and my Government is cooperating with the review panel to facilitate the preparation of the review report, because we in Ghana cherish very much our democracy and our commitment of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Our renewed resolve, within the context of NEPAD, to accelerate the sustainable development of the continent dovetails fully with the avowed commitment of the international community to help achieve the MDGs. It was, therefore, a very welcome and positive development when the General Assembly in its resolution 57/7 of 4th November 2002 urged the international community to organize support for African countries within the framework of the principles, objectives and priorities of the NEPAD. However, for this convergence of vision and effort to yield the desired results, there must be genuine partnership between Africa and the international community.

Mr. President, the implementation of NEPAD and the creation of institutions like the Pan-African Parliament, the Peace and Security Council, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and various Commissions of the recently established African Union, reflect Africa's determination to be the architect of her own future. The initiatives of ECOWAS, the West African regional body, currently chaired by the President of Ghana, H.E. John Agyekum Kufuor, in dealing with the conflicts that have recently plagued our region are good examples of this development. Accra has been the venue for successful peace talks concerning Liberia and most recently, on 29th July, 2004, Cote d'Ivoire, which has revived hopes for a durable peace in that important West African country.

The important decisions taken at the last summit of the African Union in Addis Ababa have given cause for cautious optimism as the political leadership, governments, the public, civil society and the private sector now seem to have embarked upon a journey of collaborative effort to put an end to conflicts and rather

focus on the promotion of peace and security and sustained development for the benefit of the peoples of the continent.

It is disheartening though to observe that, despite the good intentions of the international community, exemplified at the various international fora that have followed the Millennium Summit, there has not been any significant achievement due to the absence of a genuine global partnership for development. There continues to be an agonizing paradox between summit and conference declarations of a new global partnership and the persistence of an asymmetrical global system that works largely against the interests of developing countries.

Quite evidently, the laudable long-term initiatives to halve hunger and poverty by 2015 cannot be achieved without a fundamental restructuring of the global trade system - particularly in agricultural products. Such an initiative should include developed countries dismantling subsidies, lowering tariffs, and thereby helping to uphold and safeguard an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. The concerns of developing countries have been reiterated in this Assembly over the years and we urge our developed partners to act now.

For many countries in Africa, stable long-term planning will be impossible without more systematic and sustained debt relief. Despite the progress recorded in the implementation of the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and the provision of substantial debt relief by bilateral official creditors, achieving long-term debt sustainability and, at the same time, a reduction in poverty as targeted, remains a major problem for many African countries. We, therefore, welcome the initiative of British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in setting up the African Commission.

Official Development Assistance (ODA), as we are aware, continues to play an essential role in complementing other sources of financing for development and creating a congenial environment for private sector activity. Although ODA flows, which decreased in the 1990s, have picked up in recent years, the fact that these flows remain, on average, still far below internationally agreed targets, is a major cause for concern. In this connection, it is pertinent to recall that an additional \$50 billion a year in development assistance would be required as a minimum to meet the MDGs. The fundamental question facing the international community is whether it is committed to the indispensable, challenging but ultimately rewarding global partnership, which alone can make this "dream", come true.

Mr. President, the HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global emergency and a key threat to achieving the MDGs, especially for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The pandemic has caused untold suffering and death in our countries, destroying entire communities, reversing development gains and posing serious security threat.

Unfortunately, despite the substantial measures by Government in combating the scourge, Ghana's efforts have been severely constrained by lack of adequate resources, required to prevent new infections, provide care and support for people, particularly women and children living with HIV/AIDS. We wish to urge the international community to provide the needed resources for the fight against this global emergency.

Mr. President, Ghana attaches great importance to the empowerment of women to make them equal partners in the formulation and implementation of development policies. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session, gender equality has been an essential element of Ghana's efforts to attain sustainable development. The active involvement of women in political processes and decision-making at all levels and in all sectors is being vigorously pursued. Impediments such as discrimination and violence against women are being dealt with through education, advocacy and legislation.

Mr. President, despite the strong political will within the international community to create a world fit for children, the reality in many parts of the world is a far cry from the ideals voiced at the special session of the General Assembly. We call for the adoption of effective policies to eradicate poverty, ensure access to education and provide families with support to guarantee the well-being of children. Decisive international cooperation is also required to strengthen legal and other preventive mechanisms to tackle effectively the increasing practice of child trafficking for unimaginable exploitative purposes.

Ghana believes that the staff of the Organization, who sacrifice daily to maintain peace and security in zones of conflict and humanitarian disaster, deserve to be provided with a secure and safe environment in which to operate. In this regard, we have condemned and will continue to condemn any attack against United Nations personnel and call for firm action by States to establish conditions that prevent such attacks, in fulfillment of the obligations of host countries towards the United Nations and its personnel.

Ghana, as a major troop contributing country, would continue to support United Nations peacekeeping operations globally, as well as in Africa. This commitment, which begun with our participation in the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960, is borne out of the firm moral conviction of our solidarity for humanity and the knowledge that the lack of peace and stability anywhere can be a real threat to peace and security for all of us.

In conclusion, I urge Member States individually and collectively to rededicate themselves to the ideals that underpin this Organization and provide it with commensurate resources as it strives to attain the aspirations of the peoples of the world. We cannot, we should not and must not fail in this undertaking.

I thank you.